



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



2020 SOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 95th Session of the South Dakota Legislature will convene at approximately 1:00 pm on Tuesday, January 14, 2020, with Governor Noem's State of the State Address. This year's session is scheduled for 37 legislative days, with the main run concluding March 12. March 30 is reserved for considering gubernatorial vetoes.

Legislative Research Council's website can be viewed at:

<http://sdlegislature.gov/>.

Legislative bills can be viewed at:

http://sdlegislature.gov/Legislative_Session/Bills/Default.aspx?Session=2020.

The legislative calendar can be found on the next page or at:

<http://sdlegislature.gov/docs/legsession/2020/calendar.pdf>.

There are 105 legislators—35 in the Senate and 70 in the House of Representatives.

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95th SOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE SESSION CALENDAR

2020 ♦ 37 Legislative Days



Please refer to the Joint Rules, Chapter 17 for complete information.

	Sun	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat
January 2020				1	2	3	4
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	12	13	14 Session Opens 12 Noon (CST) State of the State L.D. 1	15 State of the Judiciary L.D. 2	16 State of the Tribes L.D. 3	17 L.D. 4	18
	19	20 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	21 Executive orders filed (Constitution, Art. IV, Sec. 8) L.D. 5	22 L.D. 6	23 Jt. Memorial Service 3:00 pm L.D. 7	24 Concurrent/House/Senate Resolution limited introduction deadline (J.R. 6B-3) L.D. 8	25
	26	27 L.D. 9	28 L.D. 10	29 L.D. 11	30 Last day for unlimited bill & joint resolution introduction (J.R. 6B-3) Must be at the front desk TWO HOURS prior to session L.D. 12	31	1
February 2020	2	3	4 All bill draft requests due in LRC (J.R. 6A-5) L.D. 13	5 L.D. 14	6 Last day for introduction of individual bills and joint resolutions Must be at the front desk TWO HOURS prior to session. L.D. 15	7 Last day for introduction of committee bills and joint resolutions Must be at the front desk TWO HOURS prior to session. L.D. 16	8
	9	10 L.D. 17	11 L.D. 18	12 L.D. 19	13 Last day for JCA selection of general fund revenue targets (J.R. 7-11.1) L.D. 20	14	15
	16	17 Presidents' Day L.D. 21	18 L.D. 22	19 L.D. 23	20 L.D. 24	21	22
	23	24 L.D. 25	25 L.D. 26	26 L.D. 27	27 Last day to pass bills or joint resolutions by the house of origin, AND Last day for final introduction of Concurrent/House/Senate resolutions L.D. 28	28	29
March 2020	1	2 L.D. 29	3 Last day to move required delivery of special appropriation and property sale bills to house of origin L.D. 30	4 Last day for house of origin to pass special appropriation and property sale bills L.D. 31	5 Last day to move required delivery of bills or joint resolutions by a committee to the second house, AND Last day for introduction of commemorations L.D. 32	6	7
	8	9 Last day for a bill or joint resolution to pass both houses L.D. 33	10 L.D. 34	11 L.D. 35	12 L.D. 36	13	14
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	29	30 Reserved for consideration of gubernatorial vetoes L.D. 37	31	APR 1	APR 2	APR 3	APR 4

VA RECEIVES HIGH MARKS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) received an “A” grade in November from a nonpartisan organization that evaluates the ability of federal agencies and businesses to communicate clearly with the public.

In its [2019 Federal Report Card](#), the Center for Plain Language recognized the excellent “writing quality” of VA’s online resources and singled out [VA’s suicide prevention resource site](#) as an [“exemplary urgent help page.”](#)

“This recognition validates our laser focus to provide Veterans quality customer service,” VA

2019 Federal Report Card

Secretary Robert Wilkie said. “Generating timely and clear communication about VA’s suicide prevention programs, as well as information on other vital benefits for Veterans, is among our highest priorities.”

Judges at the Center for Plain Language praised the VA’s suicide prevention resource site for following “plain language presentation principles and delivering important information up front and a clear message,” adding that “visitors will know within seconds what to do if they need to prevent a suicide.” The suicide prevention page exemplifies Secretary Wilkie’s commitment to prioritizing critical information for veterans by making it clear and accessible.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is the only other federal agency in 2019 to receive an “A” for writing quality.

The Center for Plain Language also awarded VA a “B” for organizational compliance. The grade was based, in part, on a review of [VA’s Plain Language](#) web page, which allows users to understand the VA’s efforts to achieve its plain writing goals. The [Plain Writing Act of 2010](#), which requires agencies to communicate clearly so the public can understand and use information, calls for every agency to have a plain language page.

A nonprofit group founded in 2010, the Center for Plain Language evaluates the communication qualities of federal agencies based on two categories: organizational compliance and writing quality. Since 2012, the center has issued a yearly report card that indicates how well agencies are following the Plain Writing Act. The Center for Plain language supported passage of the Plain Writing Act, which mainly evaluates agencies that provide a benefit or service to the public, such as VA, SSA and the Internal Revenue Service.

To learn more about VA’s suicide prevention services and other essential veteran health and wellness information, benefits and resources, visit the [Veterans Health Administration](#).

SFVAHCS RECEIVES ANCC PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE DESIGNATION

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System joins a premier group of organizations that have received Pathway to Excellence® designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). The achievement recognizes organizations that foster a healthy, positive workplace environment that allows nurses and all health care members to flourish.

The Pathway designation is a global credential that highlights the Sioux Falls VA's commitment to creating a healthy network environment where nurses feel empowered and valued. The Sioux Falls VA's nurses are an integral part of the healthcare team, with a voice in policy and practice. Pathway nurses are engaged, resulting in higher job satisfaction, reduced turnover, improved safety, and better patient outcomes. "It is a testament of what can be achieved when we work in unison on behalf of the Veterans we're honored to serve," said Dr. Timothy Pendergrass, acting director, Sioux Falls VA Health Care System.



As a Pathway organization, the Sioux Falls VA leads the effort to enhance quality of care, patient and nursing safety, and the future of healthcare delivery.

"On behalf of our nursing team and the entire SFVAHCS team, we're honored to have achieved the Pathway to Excellence designation," says Barbara Teal, Assoc. Director, Patient Care Services/Nurse Executive. "So many of our staff poured their hearts and devotion into this effort. This recognition validates the professionalism and dedication the staff exhibit every day and their commitment to nursing excellence," she added.

For more information on our Pathway to Excellence designation, send inquiries to Erin Bultje, public affairs officer, at 605-333-6889.

For more information on the Pathway to Excellence recognition program, visit ANCC's website at <https://www.nursingworld.org/pathway>.



VA'S PATIENT STATEMENT PORTAL NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced Dec. 18, that veterans now have digital access to patient statements through [AccessVA](#) using their secure information for DS Logon, ID.me or MyHealtheVet Premium.

Veterans receiving VA care for non-service connected conditions can view, download and print

their patient statements using the [Veteran Patient Statement](#) selection on the AccessVA homepage.

"The VA is committed to leveraging technology to help veterans access their patient information quickly and conveniently," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "We believe these advancements will help veterans manage their healthcare in more efficient ways."

Patient statements are available on AccessVA for up to six months and include a summary of services veterans receive at any VA medical facility. The VA will continue to mail veterans paper statements.

SD VIETNAM AND ERA VETERANS REUNION

The South Dakota Vietnam and Era Veterans Reunion will be held March 27-29, 2020, at the Dakota Sioux Casino and Convention Center near Watertown.

The reunion provides veterans an opportunity to meet new friends, reconnect with old friends, and be updated on issues such as veterans benefits, Agent Orange, PTSD, VA accessibility, veterans housing, etc.

Pre-registration is required—for more information, contact 605-881-6142 or 605-393-0444. This event is open to all Vietnam and Era Veterans.

South Dakota Vietnam & Era Veterans Reunion
March 27-29, 2020

Dakota Sioux Casino & Hotel Watertown, SD.

Room Rates: \$63 per-night
1-800-658-4717 or 605-882-2051

Registration Fee - \$75 per person - Register by 2/1/2020

Friday - Mar.27

Registration (check in)	4:00 PM
Agent Orange Forum	7:00 PM

Saturday - March 28

Registration	9:00 AM
Guest Speakers (TBA)	10:00 AM
Lunch	12:00 PM
Agent Orange Forum	1:00 PM
Happy Hour/Social	5:30 PM
Banquet with Speaker	6:00 PM
Auction (donated items welcomed)	7:30 PM
Dance	9:00 PM

Sunday Mar.29

Memorial Service	9:00 AM
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Send form and payment to: Vietnam Vets Reunion - PO Box 343 - Watertown, SD 57201

Name of Veteran: _____ Branch of Service _____

Dates of Service: _____

Name of Guest: _____ Amt. Enclosed \$ _____

For registration information, contact 605-881-6142 or 605-393-0444.

BLUE WATER NAVY VIETNAM VETERANS ACT CLAIMS NOW BEING DETERMINED

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will begin deciding claims for the [Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019](#) at 12:01 a.m., Philippine Standard Time, Jan. 1, 2020. The Philippines is the farthest east VA regional benefits office.

The Act extends the presumption of herbicide exposure, that include toxins such as Agent Orange, to veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

Signed into law Jun. 25, the law specifically affects Blue Water Navy (BWN) Veterans who served no more than 12 nautical miles offshore of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 6, 1962 and May 7, 1975, as well as veterans who served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between Jan. 1, 1967 and Aug. 31, 1971. These veterans can now apply for disability compensation and other benefits if they have since developed one of 14 conditions that are presumed to be related to exposure to herbicides. Veterans do not need to prove that they were exposed to herbicides. The specific conditions can be found by searching the term “Agent Orange” on www.va.gov.

“For six months, the VA worked diligently to gather and digitize records from the National Archives and Records Administration to support faster claims decisions,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “These efforts will positively impact the claims process for veterans filing for these benefits.”

To be eligible a veteran must have served in the identified locations during the specified time period and currently have a condition(s) associated with herbicide exposures, such as Agent Orange. Blue Water Navy claims are being processed under current prioritization criteria; however, special priority is being given to veterans who are over the age of 85 or have a terminal condition. Qualifying recipients include affected veterans who are still living and certain survivors of deceased BWN and Korean DMZ Veterans.

Survivors can file claims for benefits based on the veteran’s service if the veteran died from at least one of the 14 presumptive conditions associated with herbicides such as Agent Orange. The law also provides benefits for children born with spina bifida if their parent is or was a veteran with certain verified service in Thailand during a specific period.

The Act includes provisions impacting the VA Home Loan Program. Veterans have more access to obtain no-down payment home loans, regardless of loan amount, and the home loan funding fee is reduced for eligible Reservists and National Guard borrowers who use their home loan benefits for the first time. The VA’s website describes the eligibility of certain Purple Heart recipients who do not have to pay a funding fee as well as other benefits.

BWN Veterans who previously filed a claim seeking service connection for one of the 14 presumptive conditions that was denied by the VA may provide or identify any new and relevant information regarding their claim when reapplying.

As a result of the new law, the VA will automatically review claims that are currently in the VA review process or under appeal. Visit [Blue Water Navy Veterans benefits](#) for more information.



**USD VETERAN LEGAL EDUCATION GROUP INVITES YOU TO
PARTICIPATE IN A NO-CHARGE**

DROP-IN LEGAL SERVICE FOR VETERANS

**WILLS/BENEFITS/INCOME TAXES/ESTATE PLANNING
EMPLOYMENT ISSUES/DEBT COLLECTION
TENANT RIGHTS/DISABILITY RIGHTS**

**MARCH 6, 2020
9:00 AM-3:00 PM
DAV-SIOUX FALLS CHAPTER
1519 W. 51ST ST
SIOUX FALLS, SD**

Licensed attorneys, USD law students, USD Federal Tax Clinic (*student assistance does not constitute legal advice*), Veterans Service Officers, VA Benefits and VA Homeless Program staff will be available throughout the day to assist Veterans with questions, legal forms, and counsel.

*This program is funded, in part, by the State Bar of South Dakota Veterans Committee,
and South Dakota Young Lawyers*

For more information, contact: Levi Mitchell, VLEG President

Phone: (605) 658-3530

Email: Levi.Mitchell@coyotes.usd.edu



**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

**Volunteer drivers will be available in the lobby
of the SF VA to assist with transport to DAV**

**Disclaimer: VA assumes no responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of legal services provided.
This referral does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by VA.**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan 14—State of the State Address
 Jan 15—SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception
 Jan 17—BHSU Military Appreciation Night - BHSU Young Center—Spearfish—5:30 pm (MT)
 Jan 18—Military Family Carnival and Resource Fair—Central Church (2628 W. Ralph Rogers Rd)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—5:00 pm (CT)
 Jan 20—State Offices Closed
 Jan 27—VFW State Legislative Mixer—Moose Lodge—Fort Pierre—6:00—8:30 pm (CT)
 Feb 10—State American Legion Legislative Reception—AL Post 8—Pierre—5:30—8:00 pm (CT)
 Feb 21-23—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center—Oacoma
 Mar 6—Drop-In Legal Service for Veterans—DAV Sioux Falls Chapter—1519 W. 51st Street—9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)
 Mar 25—SD Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
 Mar 27-29—SD Vietnam and Era Veterans Reunion—Dakota Sioux Casino—Watertown
 May 15-17—DAV State Convention—Brookings
 May 30—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 7
 June 3-7—VFW State Convention—Aberdeen
 Jun 18-21—American legion State Convention—Huron
 Aug 24-27—SDDVA Annual Benefit School—Ramkota Conference Center—Pierre
 Sep 3—Veterans Day at the SD State Fair
 Sep 3-7—SD State Fair
 Sep 10—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 8 (Tentative)
 Oct 11—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 9 (Tentative)



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